

I support media diversity

To all concerned: My name is Isaac. I'm 28 years old and I'm writing this to you today on

behalf of myself,

as I can speak for no other person. Unlike our elected leaders, I don't get to do

speeches about how great things are for the common man and have my colonoscopy and sexual

proclivities talked about for hours on end. I'm not a singer, a star, or anything

else. The only thing I am is what I've always been; a cog in a machine that will outlast

me by centuries.

In the grand scheme of politics, somehow or another, the people that the policies affect

the most (the public) seem to have been taken out of the equation. Even though we live in

an age of "focus groups" and polls seemingly written at a 6-year old comprehension level,

the people more and more seem to be passengers being taken for a ride by a small minority.

I'm not saying nor implying there is a grandiose conspiracy on the right or the left; I'll

leave that piece of fiction to Rush Limbaugh. What it is in actuality is a system that has

become so bloated, and our leaders so far removed from what millions go through daily just

to survive, that there is a barrier between us. Leaders are now politicians from birth

mostly, Clinton being one of the few notable exceptions. When was the last time a true

common man was able to run for high office?

Politics also seems to involve voting with party affiliation more than what's actually in the

best interest of the "public trust." But it appears that those who vote on the public

trust don't apparently trust the public to be capable enough to understand things. Such

seems to be the case with the FCC's vote on the near horizon about loosening the rules on

media consolidation.

I'd heard last year this was in the works. However, I figured in that time frame that there

would be some public debate or mention of it on any mainstream news network. I found that

hope to be fervently squashed. I was checking political websites recently and lo and behold,

the vote is a mere two weeks away. Without a stitch of true public debate. The media

at large, I'm sure, would gladly hand over some airtime to dealing with such a monumental

issue. So why has there been no public debate of any merit attended by all the members

of the council?

What I meant by public debate is the following. A) The media covers this story and informs

the public of both sides of the issue. B) The FCC board members go on

tour to find out what people think about the issue. Hold town meetings or something of that nature. If we can slow down the USS Lincoln to let our President land on an airplane and have a good photo-op, costing us (taxpayers) Lord knows how much money, then surely we can have some sort of public debate about something that so affects our lives. That being said, I figured I could give you my take on it. This is a democracy and we have to say something to our leaders and the people who shape our policies. This is one of the first times I have done such a thing. Why? Because I studied accounting and have experience with marketing strategies. The regulations that are currently imposed on television media sources put limits on how many stations, etc, that one company can own. The FCC has already done away with similar legislation a few years ago that was on the radio industry. The effects have not spurred competitive market, but consolidation of independent media outlets into mostly one giant. That is Clear Channel stations. I've lived in LA, Beaumont, TX, and most recently moved to Santa Cruz. In all of those cities, a good number of the English-speaking stations were owned by Clear Channel. Most had similar formats, and the whole idea behind the station seemed to be very cookie cutter. Not ONLY that, but the music formats have been almost identical. What this is doing is promoting homogenization of American culture. Our culture is supposedly diverse, yet when you can move to three different cities in two states and you keep hearing the SAME things over and over on the radio, how exactly is that promoting diversity of culture? I have a friend in New York who has the same issues; it's all the same, no diversity at all. The only competition that Clear Channel has or ever will have will be itself. And I can easily see the same thing happening with television. However, television is a bit of a different beast that also has a different impact on our culture. The modern American gets almost all of his/her information from the television these days. Parents use it as a surrogate babysitter constantly, shaping impressionable young minds that our culture supposedly cares about so much into branded buyers at a young age. This isn't cynicism; this is marketing strategy that I have seen and heard spoken of. I worked in the retail clothing industry as a buyer and dealt with many large scale big names in the industry. They promote "cradle to grave" ideas of forming buyer loyalty, without once looking at people as people. We are products and constructs, apparently put here to buy things. Their job is to make us buy things that we don't necessarily need or want

in our lives by creating competition between us, not them. As an ad executive in a recent movie I saw said when asked what he does for a living, "I sit here all day and think of ways to make people feel bad.....People won't buy anything without first being reminded that something is missing in their lives. My job is to convince them that our product may not necessarily fill that void, but it could come damn close. That's what I do."

By loosening the rules on who can own how much, it's not going to create a similar market place. TV stations already compete with one another by stealing one another's ideas for shows because of this "competition," thereby promoting homogenization by sameness. For example, the glut of reality TV shows that show nothing like reality anywhere on them. The Real World begat Survivor begat Big Brother begat American Idol, etc.

This is going to create a glut of buys by the larger corporations and soon, there will be no independent ideas, thoughts or expressions that aren't first censored by the people who run the corporations who run the networks. Clear Channel, shortly after 9/11, issued a memo that had a list of songs on it that were NOT to be played on their radio stations. One of these songs is "Imagine," by John Lennon. Our president was about to announce he was going to bomb Afghanistan. There were almost 200 songs on that list, most well known. "Imagine" is the one that will stick out in my mind. I couldn't even remember the last time I'd heard it played on the radio. And the more stations that Clear Channel owns, the more sameness and censorship will be produced. How is this helping keep America's culture "diverse?"

This also puts an awful lot of power into too few hands, as far as shaping public opinion. When President Bush told the world he had evidence that Iraq was looking for uranium, every major media outlet picked that story up at the top of their hour on TV. When the evidence was proven to be a forgery of some sort, not one story on the evening news, nor CNN, MSNBC, FOXNews, etc. I mention that only because I had to go to the BBC to find any details on that information. I find it sad that to get objectivity in reporting, I have to go to another country's news to do so. The public should be informed of both sides of issues so that democracy will work, not just given small amounts of details doled out to shape opinion. The art of spin seems far more important than real issues or information these days.

As a concerned citizen of these United States, I respectfully ask you, the members of this board, to put aside your personal feelings on any of the issues I raised and look at it from a true cultural perspective. We are on the verge of the greatest technological leap in a society that has ever been recorded. This is a new era. However, I ask you to please not betray the principles of

democracy by allowing media consolidation  
to destroy information and cripple our democracy. An uninformed populace  
cannot participate in a true  
democracy; by allowing the TV stations to be run by a handful, we are no  
better than oppressive countries  
who only have state sponsored television. We live in an age of people  
critiquing and few doing. For  
one of the first times in my life, I'm asking something of the people who  
run things besides more diverse  
colors of crackers at the supermarket. I'm asking you to either delay  
this piece of business until a  
more public forum is conducted. Or to cast your vote for what is right in  
the interest of the public trust,  
not the corporations. We are a smart culture; I feel our leaders and  
officials need to begin treating  
us with the respect we truly deserve and inform us of things that will  
affect our lives.  
I apologize for being long winded, but this issue is important and touches  
on so many different levels  
that it was difficult to be brief.  
I thank you for your time and consideration of this.  
Respectfully,  
Isaac